

Minutes of the County Hall Management Committee held on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2010 in the Committee Room at the Old Abbey House, Abingdon.

### **Present**

Mr Peter Clare	Co-opted Abingdon Museum Friends
Cllr Margaret Crick	
Cllr Beth Fleming	Co-opted, Vale of White Horse DC
Cllr Patrick Lonergan	
Cllr Julie Mayhew-Archer	Chair
Cllr Martin Smith	
Cllr Lorraine Smith	

### **In Attendance**

Nigel Warner	Town Clerk
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#### 21 **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Duncan Brown (the Mayor of Abingdon, ex-officio) and Councillor Lesley Legge (Chair Finance and General Purposes Committee/ Leader, ex-officio).

#### 22 **Declarations of Interests**

Cllrs Julie Mayhew-Archer and Patrick Lonergan declared personal interests as Members of the Vale of White Horse District Council on the basis that the District Council provide grant aid towards the running costs of the Museum.

#### 23 **Minutes**

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the Museum Management Committee held on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2010 and 10<sup>th</sup> June 2010, as circulated with the agenda, be approved and signed as a correct record.

#### 24 **Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising which were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

#### 25 **Report of the Town Clerk**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk on the County Hall/ Museum cost centres for the financial year to date, and progress on the County Hall Improvement and Access Project, as circulated with the agenda.

It was noted that there were no significant variances to report to date. The salaries and wages were entered to the end of August 2010 and the insurance premium shown was for the whole year. It was further noted that with the improvement and access project progressing the Museum will close to the public at the end of October 2010 and this will result in some savings against some lines on the revenue budget, as provision was made in the budget, on a prudential basis, for revenue costs to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

In terms of Council key objectives, this Committee's objective for 2010/11 was to progress the Improvement and Access Project and this is progressing on timetable.

In response to a question from a Member the Town Clerk stated that the Project would increase the accounting work which he would need to be managed and this needed to be taken account of in forward planning when taking account of other projects and developments.

It was reported that the Project included funding for temporary accommodation for the Museum team and that the old IT room at the Old Abbey House had been secured from the District Council on licence.

The Council had been very successful in raising significant sums towards the Project. However the Project team were now focused on preparing the tender for the building work and the Town Clerk expressed a concern that the Project team who had previously led on applying for grants would not have the resources to do this effectively for some months and this would need to be addressed. It was **resolved** that the Town Clerk liaise with the Curator regarding this matter and be authorised to make such arrangements as necessary in order make further applications to grant-making bodies.

**Resolved:** that the report be received and noted.

26 **Museum Friends**

The Committee received a verbal update on the recent meetings and activities of the Museum Friends.

The Chair encouraged Members to get involved and attend Friends' events although it was recognised that Members have many demands on their time.

**Resolved:** that the report be received and noted.

27 **Museum Volunteers**

Members received and considered the report of the Volunteer Manager, Mr Peter Gale, as circulated with the agenda.

It was reported that formalisation of the Museum's volunteer programme has begun with the appointment of a Volunteer Manager (a voluntary position). His task was to recruit and co-ordinate the activities of volunteers on behalf of the employed project team. The HLF-funded project had targeted nine volunteer days per week.

Volunteer roles had been defined, application forms will be completed, with a CV and references, and an agreement will be signed with each volunteer. In essence, volunteers would be treated as unpaid employees, the notable exception being the absence of a contractual relationship. The volunteers' training will range from health and safety to object handling, as well as the collections software (MODES). In the absence of financial rewards, every effort will be made to reward volunteers' endeavours by providing interesting work assignments and experience, in a friendly and supportive environment.

The Volunteer Manager was projected to work 2/3 days per week pending a review following the closure of the Museum. In the short term, the support given to the Decant Assistant was planned to exceed the generally accepted target of 60 days per annum for each volunteer, with two new volunteers, Jason Fiddaman and Lizzie Fuller, assigned to this task initially. Once the Museum has been emptied, it was

hoped that all the volunteers will transfer to work with collections, technical design and audience development. Further volunteers would be recruited, as necessary.

Fredericka Smith, who has national museum curatorial experience, would work on the selection of objects for open-storage display, prior to removal of the collections to Standlake. Janice Glover would complete the selection and labelling of the fossil collection prior to storage.

A second tier of voluntary support was provided by Museum Friends' group members who give of their time to help with fund raising events and activities. Included in this support was a youth team run by Ben Samuels. All these people would report to Ruth Weinberg, an existing volunteer.

The Chair asked that the Committee's thanks be conveyed to Mr Gale for his hard work on this matter and his continued involvement in the work of the Museum.

**Resolved:** that the report be received and noted.

## 28 Exhibitions & Decant

Members received and considered the report in relation to current exhibitions and decanting the building ahead of the development.

The current exhibitions were "The 26 Centuries of Abingdon" and "The Stuarts." It was reported that the exhibitions were popular and whilst some elements of the displays had not worked this time, many elements had.

The Chair encouraged Members to take a good look at the exhibition which was currently housed in the Sessions Hall as it gave a good indication of what was planned when the Museum re-opened.

With regard to the decant, the work in preparing for, and clearing, the building was well under way and it was intended to organise the first stage of removals into storage for the beginning of September. A number of sections of the collection had been checked and photographed, and plans were in place for the next few sections, many of which had been photographed and audited recently. There were a number of issues that could potentially cause delays in the future, and can be managed in advance, or dealt with now.

**Resolved:** that the report be received and noted.

## 29 Administrator's report

Members received and considered administrator's report which included the museum visitor figures.

It was reported that the roof, which was due to open on Saturdays until the end of September, was closed until after the Museum reopens in 2012. The roof was one area which required significant work and improvement as part of the Project and it had become clear that it was now dangerous for the public to use the roof until this work had been done. The Town Clerk had therefore reluctantly taken the decision earlier in the month to close the roof and the Committee **resolved** to endorse this decision.

It was reported that the Museum office move would take place on 31<sup>st</sup> August with the new staff arriving on the 13<sup>th</sup> September. The Administrator would remain in the Museum and move across at the end of October 2010. With regard to the shop the Administrator suggested taking some stock over to the Town Council offices to sell alongside goods already on sale there, putting some stock in storage and possibly selling off the remainder.

The Committee asked that their thanks be conveyed to the Administrator for her report and her hard work in relation to the office move.

**Resolved:** that the report be received and noted.

30 **Education and family-friendly activities**

Members received and considered the report in relation to education and family-friendly activities.

It was noted that the Museum had taught its last school group in July and will now not be teaching any more schools until it reopens in 2012 as the basement needed to be emptied of materials. The school groups had been very successful and resulted in the museum being fully booked one year in advance. Since 2007 over 100 schools had participated and over 3,000 children had been taught.

With regard to holiday activities the programme had also now finished. The activities programme had commenced in 2007 and had been taught every holiday using multiple topics/themes. Over 3,500 children and 2,500 adults had participated.

Members considered that the Council's work in the Museum and education was an important support to the work of the County Council in these matters.

It was noted that Clare Cottrell, who had worked hard on the education and family activities since its inception in 2007 would be leaving the Museum and they asked that their heartfelt thanks be conveyed to her.

**Resolved:** that the report be received and noted.

31 **Dates of meetings for 2010/11**

It was noted that the dates for the municipal year 2010/2011 are:

Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2011.

It was further noted that during the course of the year, additional special meetings may be required, particularly to consider the County Hall and Museum Improvement and Access Project. As much notice as possible would be given of any such meetings.

32 **Exclusion of the public, including the press**

**Resolved:**

That in accordance with section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 (as extended by Section 100 of the Local Government Act 1972), the public

(including the press) be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

- Abingdon County Hall Museum Improvement and Access Project;
- Museum Staffing.

The meeting rose at 8.30 p.m.